

# **EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

## **School Committee Meeting**

**East Providence City Hall, Room 306**

**145 Taunton Avenue**

**East Providence, Rhode Island 02914**

**August 2, 2006**

### **Open Session**

**Chairman Gouveia called the meeting to order at 8:00AM. Four members were present: Robert Faria, David Medeiros, Mildred Morris, Antone Gouveia. Also present were Mr. Manuel Vinhateiro, former Superintendent of Schools and Dr. Jacqueline Forbes, Superintendent of Schools.**

**The purpose of the meeting was to hold a joint work session with the East Providence City Council to discuss the 2006-2007 budget pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement between the City Council and the School Committee.**

**Mr. Vinhateiro addressed the School Committee and City Council. He stated that as in past meetings, he would preview the upcoming budget process already in the beginning stages for the City Departments and the School Department. He thanked the state**

**legislators for their hard work and support of the education budget for 2006-07. Preview as follows:**

**„X Mr. Vinhateiro explained the anticipated areas of increased expenditures: energy, benefits, salaries, special education tuitions and transportation, debt service, and pension fund contributions. The School Department has been collaborating with the city to try to reduce health insurance costs and have contracted with a service company to provide expertise, so that both the City and the School Department can receive the lowest costs possible. (A timeline indicated that the Requests for Proposals would be issued on 8/4/06, Quotations would be reviewed by 9/06 and Contract Actualization would occur in 11/2006). The School Department is committed to looking for whatever is the best possible cost savings for the community and are hopeful at bare minimum will be under a double digit increase this year, as competition may sharpen. Councilman Caine asked to make sure programs are included to educate employees, as rates are driven by usage.**

**„X The School Department has reduced personnel by 20 additional teaching positions and a Multi-Lingual position; 64 full time teaching positions have been eliminated since 2004.**

**„X Mr. Gouveia commented that class sizes are dangerously close and as we reduce these positions, we have become more efficient but are maxing out on every single classroom. Mr. Vinhateiro said this is**

not an attractive option, but if students move in and classrooms are closed, they are administratively reassigned to another school. Mayor Larisa asked about enrollment numbers.

„X Mr. Vinhateiro explained that the bulk of personnel reductions are due to declining enrollment. Dr. Forbes related that over five-years, enrollments have decreased in the elementary grades. Discussion took place regarding five year projections. Costs of positions eliminated in 2006-07 are over \$1 Million. Mr. Gouveia commented that this is the last year of the catch up phase regarding the pension. Mr. Vinhateiro related that about three weeks ago, an article by the State Treasurer indicated that this is the last big increase year as long as the market remains stable. Discussion took place regarding funding the pension system.

„X Mr. Vinhateiro said from a statewide perspective, through our efficiency and providing all the services we are required to provide, our per pupil cost is \$11,380; East Providence ranks 24 out of 36 communities. East Providence is providing quality programs while being efficient.

Jeanne Boyle, Acting City Manager asked about anticipated capital numbers for the School Department. Mr. Vinhateiro needs to find out if debt service is included in those numbers (per pupil). Discussion took place regarding improvements at Martin Middle School and the positive end result.

**Mr. Gouveia stated that from the School Committee perspective, the impact to the taxpayer is just operating costs; we should put some capital improvements in this budget on the recommendation of the auditors. These things could be put in, but only superficial and would be taken out. The questions becomes do we really need, and we put it in only to cut it out. Ms. Boyle felt we need to put those true pressing capital needs in the budget, because we lose money if we have to deal with these repairs on an emergency basis mid year. Dr. Hilton stated there is a five year plan. Mr. Caine would like to review those numbers; we should do what we have to do.**

**Mr. Vinhateiro stated that Ms. Boyle requested information on capital improvements to include with the City. Mayor Larisa asked about the High School HVAC system (Dr. Hilton advised that we receive about 46% reimbursement from the State).**

**Mr. Vinhateiro said the School Department has aggressively re-lighted most of the buildings, thereby reducing kilowatt hours and it is anticipated that a new heating system at the High School would tremendously increase the efficiency of that structure; the High School is 50 years old and can burn 1000 gallons of oil per day. Dr. Hilton said we need to do an engineering study. Mayor Larisa said the heating system should be done next year through financing**

**Mr. Vinhateiro believed there is a mandate for the gas company to do**

a study, planning, etc. to find the best way to go. Discussion took place regarding how to solve the High School HVAC system problems. Mr. Gouveia agreed with the Mayor regarding funding; bonding is not the way to go. Mr. Vinhateiro said this would be a mammoth project with many environmental concerns. Mayor Larisa advised to get legislation in now regarding financing/bonding. The Mayor said the consensus is to start now to put in a heating system at the High School. Mr. Vinhateiro said we need to explore a dual system with gas and oil. Mr. Midgley asked what percentage of the per pupil number is provided by the State (38%).

„X Mr. Vinhateiro advised that the School Department is committed to reducing the deficit explained in the report on page 10 ¡§Projected Debt Reduction.¡¨ He stated with all confidence, the deficit will be paid again this year; the faster we eliminate it, the better.

Mr. Vinhateiro thanked everyone for attending. Mr. Caine asked if any numbers were available yet. (Health care information due 8/26, according to Ms. Boyle). Mr. Caine asked about conversion from self insured to premium. Discussion regarding health care contracts; reductions, negotiations, etc.

Councilwoman Valerie Perry asked if there were any plans to address students attending the High School who do not live in East Providence. Mr. Vinhateiro explained that the School Department addresses this in several ways: central registration office with valid

proof of residency; follow up on any tips from the community, bus drivers, etc. and a check on discontinued phone numbers in the system. We decline any requests related to NCLB school choice.

Mrs. Perry asked about consolidating services such as purchasing, etc. (Examples are the IT Director and the state bid list). Mrs. Perry said she appreciates meetings like this to collaborate. Mr. Vinhateiro felt that the health care collaboration sends a message; what has the least effect on the tax bills.

Mayor Larisa felt this was a good meeting and that a lot of progress has been made with the School Department and another meeting should be planned in the fall to update news.

Mayor Larisa requested that information be sent to him regarding changing special education class size (change from 10 to 12); he will bring it to the Governor's attention. On mandates such as transportation, he suggested that we get the Mayor to push it along. The Mayor said he will sign contracts with city employees who will be contributing a share on benefits, and after last year's increase, this needs to be extended to the school side. The Mayor argued that more needs to be done on the school side.

Mr. Faria asked about the terms of the union agreements. (Raise 3.5% retro to last year).

Mr. Gouveia related that the unions have not agreed to reopen anything, but now that this is official, he will be asking formally, since

**they will no longer be first. Mr. Caine feels this is leverage to discuss this issue and he thanked Mr. Fazioli and Ms. Boyle, as it has taken an entire year to get to this position. Discussion took place regarding health care costs again. Mr. Faria said a lot needs to be done over the next two years.**

**It was agreed that another meeting should be held between September 15 and 30th.**

**Mr. Vinhateiro will send a letter to the Mayor regarding details of the High School heating system.**

**A motion was made by Mrs. Morris to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Medeiros. Vote 4-0.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Patricia A. Iannelli, Executive Secretary**

**David A. Medeiros, Clerk of the Committee**